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UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

POSITION PAPER

EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

PROBLEM

The Department of State has received a recent communication from the American Ambassador in Egypt indicating that the Egyptian Representative at the General Assembly may propose the establishment of an Economic Commission for the Middle East parallel to the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The United States should discourage the establishment of an Economic Commission for the Middle East at this time.

2. Any specific proposal for the establishment of such a commission should be referred for consideration to the Economic and Social Council. If possible, the item should be referred without prior discussion in the General Assembly on the merits of the case, and without any recommendation from the General Assembly as to the desirability of the establishment of such a Commission.

DISCUSSION

1. The question of the establishment of an Economic Commission for the Middle East has never been put in the form of a specific proposal, although references to the possibility of the establishment of such a Commission were made both in the Fourth Session of the Economic and Social Council and the Fifth Session of the Economic and Social Council during discussion of the establishment of other regional commissions. The principal reasons for the present United States position are the same as those contained in the position paper presented for the Fifth Session of the Economic and Social Council, as quoted below:

"a. There are no reconstruction problems in the area comparable to those in Europe or in the Far East.

"b. The economies of the countries involved are not complementary to each other but tend to be competing and little substantive gain could be achieved. The major, immediate function which might be performed by such an organization would be in connection with

the settlement of disputes between countries on water rights. As in the case of the Far East, there are few railroads crossing international boundaries in the area.

"c. There are serious political difficulties from the United States standpoint in the creation of such a body. Among these are: (1) The hazards of encouraging the U.S.S.R. to take a hand in the area through the creation of this body, which could scarcely be expected to exclude her; (2) Turkish embarrassment in case the U.S.S.R. is brought into the area to the East and South of Turkey; (3) The development of the Palestine situation is as yet uncertain; (4) A possible French claim to be considered a Near Eastern power might have international repprcussions and produce friction with Syria and Lebanon; (5) The Iranian position is not clear in view of Iranian indifference toward the other Arab states; (6) The possibility that India might attempt to seize a position of leadership in the Near East through such an organization in addition to her role in the Far East.

"d. There have already been attempts made for the creation of joint economic machinery in the area but these attempts have failed in view of the lack of economic justification. The proposed Near Eastern Agricultural Body (which was under discussion shortly before FAO was created) was never developed. The Arab League has an Economic Committee which has not been used to much effect for want of a basic economic justification.

"e. It is not believed that there will be great support for this body even among the Arab states themselves unless it is made a matter of prestige."

2. The Economic and Social Council at its Fifth Session adopted a resolution put forward by the representative of New Zealand requesting the Economic and Employment Commission "to examine and report to the Council upon the general questions involved in the creation of regional Economic Commissions as a means for the promotion of the aims and objectives of the United Nations". It is desirable that the Economic and Employment Commission make its report to the Economic and Social Council before any decision is taken to establish further regional commissions.